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June 27, 2011

The Honorable Mark Jansen
State Senator
State Capitol
P.O. Box 30036
Lansing, MI 48909-7536

Dear Senator Jansen:

On behalf of PHI (formerly Paraprofessional Healthcare Institute) I would like to indicate our interest and support in principle of Senate Bill (SB) 221, a bill licensing in-home services agencies. PHI is a not-for-profit organization that works to improve the lives of people who need home or residential care – and of the workers who provide that care.

PHI strongly supports licensing home care services and agencies. Michigan is in the minority of states with no regulation of these services and service providers. Yet, the need is great for clear, effective consumer protection of this type, and will only increase. Consider this: over the next 5 years, the number of Michigan residents age 65 and over is expected to grow from approximately 1.35 million in 2011 to 1.54 in 2016. As a result, the long-term care sector of the health care workforce is adding thousands of new jobs. Interestingly, the bulk of the growth in the direct-care workforce for the decade starting in 2008 is coming from those workers providing home and community based services – home health aides and personal care assistants – as opposed to those providing services in residential settings, such as nursing facilities or assisted living.

As the industry grows, so will the demand for consumer protections. Licensure by definition is intended to provide that which consumers have difficulty ascertaining for themselves in the market place: the assurance of competent, trained, stable, effective services and providers. Licensure also assures that public and private revenues are invested in quality services and businesses that are accountable.

PHI has experience working in states with and without licensure of in-home services. Based upon that experience, PHI believes that the following factors will be critical in developing the best possible licensure act for in-home services agencies and residents of Michigan:



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- Strong consumer representation on both licensure and advisory boards, and meaningful consumer input in the rulemaking process;
- Promotion of best practices, including client-centered decision-making;
- Consistent, state-wide, competency-based education and training requirements for all staff, regardless of setting or supervision;
- A strong quality evaluation process that is clear and consistent, wherein safe, competent providers can function without undue regulatory burdens;
- A strong quality evaluation process where consumers can be assured that unsafe, incompetent, fraudulent providers are denied licensure, a change of ownership, or have a license revoked;
- Consumer-friendly features such as a listing of all licensees so that consumers, discharge planners, and potential job applicants can find these agencies.
- Annual data collection by the department on the licensee's workforce—size, compensation, and stability—for a host of public and private planning purposes.

I would appreciate the opportunity to discuss this in greater depth. Our governmental affairs consultant, Jean Doss, will contact your office in the near future to request a meeting. You are also welcome to contact me directly at 517.327.0331 or HTurnham@PHInational.org.

In closing, we applaud your leadership on this important issue, and look forward to working with you as SB 221 moves forward in the legislative process.

Sincerely,



Hollis Turnham, Midwest Director



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